



Governor Jim Doyle

## Guest Editorial

# Improving patient safety through electronic medical records

Governor Jim Doyle

I'm committed to ensuring that all Wisconsin citizens receive quality health care. Since I took office, I have worked to lower the price of prescription drugs, help our farmers and small businesses through health care cooperatives, and preserve BadgerCare, Medical Assistance, and SeniorCare for our most vulnerable citizens despite tough budget times.

However, about 30% of health care spending—up to \$300 billion each year nationwide—is inappropriate, redundant, or unnecessary. In fact, according to the US Institute of Medicine, up to 98,000 people in the United States can die every year from medical errors.

That is why, on November 2, 2005, I signed Executive Order 129, creating an eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety Board, which will be charged with developing a plan to automate all health care information systems in Wisconsin.

The field of medicine has yet to harness the power of information technology at the most important point in the health care system—patient treatment. Instead, health care professionals still often rely on paper charts, written by hand. With automated systems, patient treatment could be improved and much of the unnecessary administrative costs could be eliminated if health care professionals had electronic medical records systems.

That's why I'm pleased to an-

nounce the creation of the eHealth Care Quality and Patient Safety Board, to be chaired by Secretary Helene Nelson of the Department of Health and Family Services. Along with developing a plan to automate all health care information systems in Wisconsin, the board will also develop a road map for the private and public sectors to automate their systems in a coordinated way that will improve care for the Wisconsin population, safeguard the privacy and security of health information, and reduce overall health care costs for both the public and private sectors.

In addition, the Board will develop recommendations for the following:

- Identifying existing ehealth resources, including funding sources, to support the development of a statewide ehealth information infrastructure.
- Identifying technology options, and their advantages and disadvantages, for a statewide ehealth information infrastructure.
- Identifying options for serving consumer health information needs.
- Insuring health information privacy and security in electronic health information exchange.
- Facilitating statewide adoption of electronic health record standards to enable health information exchanges across the state and nationally.
- Creating organization and governance structures for a state-wide ehealth information infrastructure that is consistent with national standards under development.

Making the transition to electronic medical records can prevent medical errors and reduce administrative costs. This is a win-win situation for Wisconsin physicians and residents alike.

Wisconsin must control health care costs as a key to a long term strategy of growing our state's economy. By reducing state expenditures and enhancing the business environment for both large and small employers, we can make that happen.

I want every person in Wisconsin to have the opportunity to enjoy all that life in this great state has to offer. That means access to good-paying, family-supporting jobs. That means access to a great public education—from 4-year-old kindergarten through college. And that means access to quality, affordable health care.

I look forward to seeing the work the Health Care Quality and Patient Safety Board is going to do, and I look forward to working with all of the members of the Wisconsin Medical Society as we focus on improving our health care system and moving all of Wisconsin forward.

# Wisconsin Medical Journal

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